

Supervisor's Evaluation of Jules Lighuen Rodríguez Cantero Master's Thesis
Decolonial/Postcolonial, Feminist, and Mapuche Dialogues through Ana Tijoux:
Collectivity and Voice in Artistic Practices

Jules Lighuen Rodríguez Cantero's thesis is among the first in our Gender Studies Program to employ the combination of theoretical concepts developed by (predominantly) Latin American tradition of decolonial thought on the one hand and feminist critical theories on the other. This makes for an intriguing analysis of selected musical works by Ana Tijoux, an artist, activist, and a singer of mixed, national, cultural, linguistic, and racial background. In the thesis, music does not arise as a mere art and audiovisual production, but as an activist tool for deconstruction of Western hetero-patriarchy, exposure of the exploitative capitalist system targeting the regions of the Global South and – in alignment of the protest song genre – an appeal for intersectional social justice.

Jules uses decolonial concepts of knowledge ecologies to argue for reading/listening to Tijoux's music as a pedagogical text (in a vast understanding of the term "text") that teaches/proposes critical thinking and solidarity as values of community building. Further, Jules selects representative songs and their lyrics for analysis, topics of which pertain to women's lived experiences such as motherhood, sexual violence etc., and/or otherwise marginalized subjects' conditions pertaining to class, disenfranchisement, land loss etc. Moreover, the student seeks to explain how indigenous/Mapuche knowledges and cosmovisions propose emancipatory epistemologies that counter established Western categories of rationality and modernity. The thesis fittingly shows, how Tijoux makes use of her hybrid position and tailors her art based on the combination of indigenous knowledge and the operations of existing power relations (be those economic, gendered, racial and other).

While Jules' text is inspiring, challenging and clearly makes well-founded arguments for deconstruction/dissolution of power hierarchies of various types for the sake of social and gender justice, the text would benefit from a more rigorous critical discussion of barriers that thwart Tijoux's messages and their practical application(s). In a sense, the thesis tackles the theory vs. practice conundrum, but does not address the issue explicitly. I would invite Jules to discuss both the limits and the opportunities in Tijoux's oeuvre in this regard. Also, at times the text is repetitive in its arguments; this perhaps arises from the student's attempts to link theory and analysis. Nevertheless, a more eloquent formulation of argument development would aid the text's dynamics and flow. Still, Jules' is an outstanding thesis in terms of the theories mastered to conduct the research project. Commendable is also Jules' extensive list of bibliographical sources and their explication of research positionality.

Jules repeatedly and extensively consulted the choice of topic and the sources for analysis with me as well as the whole concept of their thesis project to which they gave lots of thought. Also, we met frequently to discuss the progress while the thesis was being written. The process was not smooth, which it never is with outstanding and challenging pieces of writing. The student,

however, worked independently and meticulously responded to and acted on my suggestions for text and thesis concept and structure modifications. Jules incorporated the majority of my recommendations and their cooperation with me as a supervisor was exemplary and, I believe, mutually academically enriching.

Jules also faced some ethical issues pertaining to academic and authorial integrity. After their theoretical chapter was already completed, Jules learned that the author of some of the major theoretical concepts employed in the thesis was charged with sexual abuse of a leading Mapuche activist. Since the inherent imperative of feminist and decolonial thought is the deconstruction of power and self-reflective ethical conduct that also pertains to use of academic sources, Jules and I had an extensive debate about the use of the author's concepts, referencing and repeating of his name in the text, and – in general – on how critical decolonial thought cognizant of power exploitation does not necessarily align with the thinkers' personal behavior. In effect, the case demonstrates some of the dilemmas of how a feminist and/or decolonial researcher should/should not (?) navigate the serious ramifications on unethical conduct that starkly contradicts and undermines the concepts and ideas that have helped build an established author's academic career and fame.

In general, Jules has not only demonstrated research independence and integrity in dealing with the subject at hand, but also excellence and maturity in establishing and developing their multifaceted and attentive arguments about the role of an artist and music in building solidarity and coalitions across intersectional divides.

It is with confidence that **I recommend Jules Lighuen Rodríguez Cantero's thesis for defense** and suggest it be graded **between excellent** (for inventiveness, dedication, and research independence) **and very good** (for clarity of argument formulation, structural text organization, and the linkage of theory and analysis).

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